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Chair: Mr. Zelioli (Vice-Chair) ..... (Italy)

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In the absence of Mr. Haniff (Malaysia), Chair, Mr. Zelioli (Italy), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/66/41 (Supp.), A/66/227, 228, 230, 256 and 257)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/66/258)

1. **Mr. Jung** Jin Ho (Republic of Korea) said that the enormous progress made in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child would not have been possible without the concerted efforts of United Nations mechanisms. Nevertheless, concern was growing over the inequity among children around the world, particularly regional and local disparities in the field of health, and further assistance was required for the most vulnerable. In that regard, his Government had recently enacted a law on the welfare of children with disabilities.

2. **Ms. Yim** Pu-Reum (Republic of Korea), speaking as youth delegate, said that one way to measure success in dealing with the problems affecting children would be the degree to which young people were involved in the development and implementation of national plans of action at all levels.

3. Youth were able to use modern technologies and social media to ensure that children were better protected and educated. Immediate action was required to involve youth leadership in the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and to harness the younger generation's free exchange of ideas, constructive criticism, creativity and energy. Lastly, additional financial resources were needed at the national and the international levels.

4. **Mr. Al-Siri** (United Arab Emirates) said that the United Nations and its specialized agencies were striving to protect the rights of the world's children in the face of formidable challenges, and his delegation reaffirmed its support for those efforts. The United Arab Emirates had ratified numerous international instruments relating to children, and also the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, both of which included provisions relating to children. It had enacted legislation designed to give effect to those instruments, and had also earmarked resources for child protection programmes and action to upgrade the skills of persons working in the area of children's welfare.

5. The United Arab Emirates had achieved significant progress in the areas of children's education, health and fundamental rights. Education for children of both sexes was free, and enrolment was close to 100 per cent. Infant and under-5 mortality rates had been greatly reduced. Comprehensive health services included prevention and early detection programmes, a health promoting schools project, and nourishing meals for schoolchildren.

6. Poorer developing States, however, were confronted with great difficulties in providing children with adequate education and nutrition for want of the necessary resources. The United Arab Emirates was providing assistance in that connection, in some cases through financial contributions, in others through development initiatives and programmes in the countries in question, sometimes in partnership with United Nations agencies. In particular, children in the Horn of Africa, notably in Somalia, were being provided with food, shelter and medical care in response to the drought and famine afflicting that region.

7. Despite such efforts, children in many countries were still denied their fundamental rights because of poverty, disease, armed conflict and occupation; Palestinian children in the occupied territories, including Gaza in particular, were still living under siege. Greater efforts were needed in order to provide an appropriate economic and security environment to enable those countries to provide the necessary care and protection for their children.

8. **Mr. Jerandi** (Tunisia) said that recently, young, educated Tunisians had peacefully claimed their rights to freedom, democracy and a decent life. As a result, the country was preparing to undertake a new phase of its history where its people would participate in building a balanced society, which respected the rights of the most vulnerable groups.

9. Tunisia had enacted comprehensive legislation to guarantee the rights of the child and to protect children against violence and exclusion. It believed in the importance of allowing children to express their opinions and take part in the different aspects of family, social and political life. In that regard, it had

established a children's parliament and children's town councils to help the public authorities better understand the new generations and adapt their policies, strategies and legal frameworks to the specific needs of children.

10. Family and child judges had been introduced, together with child protection agents; also, close partnerships had been established between the public and private sectors, in the belief that the well-being of children was the best guarantee for building a tolerant, open and responsible society. Tolerance and dialogue were two values that should be inculcated in society in order to guarantee a better future.

11. Tunisia called on the international community to make a greater investment in children and young people, to listen and respond to their concerns and to pay them the attention that they deserved as the driving force for the future.

12. **Mr. Nagapan** (Malaysia) said that the problems faced by children in developing countries could not be solved unless the underlying issues related to underdevelopment, poverty and conflict were addressed and the countries concerned were provided with the necessary resources and assistance.

13. Malaysia had acceded to the Convention in 1994 and the Government was studying the possibility of withdrawing the remaining reservations. The 2001 Child Act was based on the Convention, and the country had national policies and plans of action for children and their protection. In the case of vulnerable children, the Social Welfare Department had established shelters for neglected, abused and orphaned children where rehabilitation, treatment and special education services were provided.

14. Recognizing that education was an effective tool for improving the quality of life of its people, Malaysia had consistently allocated around one fifth of the national budget to education and training. Moreover, in 2012, it would be providing free primary and secondary education for all nationals.

15. Lastly, in 2010, Malaysia had hosted the inaugural First Ladies Summit where those present undertook to organize initiatives to empower children and develop their potential to become leaders, thus strengthening the foundations for nation-building and global peace.

16. **Mr. Thant Sin** (Myanmar) said that since acceding to the Convention in 1991, Myanmar had enacted legislation and established working committees on the rights of the child. Its current national action plan focused on health and nutrition, water and sanitation, education, and child protection. Its third and fourth national report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, prepared with the active participation of all sectors, would be considered in January 2012.

17. The sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography constituted the most severe violations of the rights of the child and the international community should collaborate to identify durable solutions to the problem. With help from UNICEF, Myanmar was making an effort to disseminate and raise awareness of the Convention and the relevant legislation among the general public, including children and young people.

18. The Government had made a commitment that no child under 18 years of age would be recruited for military service, and a Committee for the Prevention of the Recruitment of Minors had been established in 2004. Disciplinary action had been taken against military personnel who failed to abide by the recruitment rules and regulations.

19. **Archbishop Chullikatt** (Observer for the Holy See) said that Member States should work to strengthen policies and practices that prevented the abuse of children and ended the impunity of those who committed grave violations against children during armed conflict. In addition, standards of juvenile justice should be applied that took into account the best interests of the child and promoted reintegration into the family and the community.

20. Regarding the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, preventive measures that addressed critical socio-economic factors should form the core component of national child protection systems. Education and awareness-raising were important components of such measures and although the school had an important role to play, parents and the family had the primary and essential role in educating children, including in the area of human sexuality.

21. Lastly, States had the obligation to provide children with the protection and care required for all aspects of their development by implementing sound laws and policies.

22. **Mr. Al-Mossawy** (Iraq) said that the Iraqi Government had taken all possible legislative and administrative measures to protect and care for

children and to promote the stability of the family. A child welfare body had been established with representatives from all relevant ministries and institutions, together with experts and representatives from non-governmental organizations, responsible for designing and implementing plans and programmes to improve the situation of children in Iraq.

23. To establish a culture of human rights among children, friends of human rights groups had been set up in schools through independent and direct elections during which discussions had been held on the harmful effects of armed conflicts, extremism and violence and on the principles of human rights irrespective of gender, politics, religion and ethnicity.

24. The Government was working to meet all its international obligations concerning children and had established advisory committees to help it make the necessary amendments to domestic law.

25. **Mr. Archondo** (Bolivia) said that education was essential for a child's development and, by law, Bolivia was obliged to develop the potential of children with disabilities, with no discrimination of any kind.

26. The Convention had been incorporated into the country's new Constitution, and was reflected in the Children's Code that regulated the regime of prevention, protection and integral attention to children. The National Development Plan included a comprehensive intersectoral approach to children's affairs that had been designed to combat malnutrition, illiteracy and violence, while reducing maternal and child mortality.

27. The Bolivian Constitution expressly prohibited child labour and a grant programme had been established to encourage children to remain in school. In addition, a literacy programme had recently been completed successfully.

28. Respect for the human rights of children and adolescents was a guarantee of rights and freedoms, development and peace for the whole population. Bolivia was committed to complying with the Convention through measures that included an intergenerational perspective and that ensured the well-being not only of children and adolescents, but also of the family and the community.

29. **Mr. Al-Balushi** (Oman) said that children were still denied their rights in many parts of the world, being forced to perform hard labour and involved in wars, with all the horrors that that entailed. The international community should assume a larger role in ensuring their protection.

30. Aware that children were the support of society and the ultimate objects of development, Oman had acceded to all the relevant international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as International Labour Organization Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment.

31. Oman provided a full range of health care and education services for its children, with particular attention to orphans and young persons. Education was free, and dropout rates had been significantly reduced. Curricula designed to develop children's talents had been developed in cooperation with UNICEF. Children with disabilities received state-of-the-art services designed to enable them to enjoy a life of dignity and to integrate into society. The ultimate aim was to produce citizens who would be capable of building a bright future for themselves and their country.

32. **Ms. Tawk** (Lebanon) said that Lebanon was firmly committed to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international instruments. The country's Higher Council for Childhood worked with the Government, community bodies and international organizations to monitor the implementation of the Convention.

33. In the area of legislation, the concept of "crimes of honour", which had sometimes involved children, had been eliminated from the country's Penal Code, while a draft bill making education compulsory up to the age of 15 (instead of 13) had recently been tabled in the National Assembly.

34. It was distressing that millions of children around the world were victims of violence. Under Lebanese law, persons subjecting children to sexual aggression or physical harm were liable to prosecution. The Higher Council for Childhood had established a committee tasked with protecting children from abuse and neglect, and the committee had already produced a draft national strategy with that aim. Child victims of sexual aggression received specialized therapy.

35. In order to be effective, however, the legal framework would have to be accompanied by greater awareness on the part of Governmental institutions and civil society. Action in that connection included training for persons who worked with children and

initiatives aimed at associating children themselves with the tasks of defining their needs and suggesting how they might be met. Municipal children's councils, made up of 11- and 12-year-olds from the sixth year of primary school, had been established as a means of helping children learn about democracy and problem-solving. Lebanon's regional commitments relating to violence against children included those contained in the Marrakech Declaration adopted at the fourth High-Level Arab Conference on Children's Rights in 2010.

36. Children with disabilities, for their part, had the same fundamental human rights as other children. The Higher Council on Childhood had established a committee on children with disabilities, which was currently working on an educational and health-care strategy for those children.

37. Armed conflicts adversely impacted the security and well-being of children; people in fragile and conflict-affected States were more than three times as likely to be unable to send their children to school as those in other developing countries, and twice as likely to see their children die before the age of 5. In Lebanon in particular, the cluster bombs sown by Israel during its 2006 aggression directly threatened children's safety; since 2006, those devices had killed 44 people and injured 303, including 102 children. Lebanon itself had ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

38. **Ms. Ramosepele** (South Africa) said that the South African Bill of Rights emphasized the promotion and protection of children's rights. The Government had adopted relevant legislation and programmes, including a system that allowed children accused of certain offences to be dealt with outside the regular criminal justice regime.

39. Governments should continue to make child protection systems a priority. South Africa had established a Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities to advance equitable access to development opportunities for marginalized groups.

40. International partnerships remained key in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, and concerted efforts were needed to bridge the gap between political intentions and action. South Africa called upon countries that retained the death penalty to consider a moratorium with regard to children under 18 years of age.

41. **Mr. Ulibarri** (Costa Rica) said that since it had not been possible to comment on the report of the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and ask questions, Member States should invite her to enter into an interactive dialogue with the General Assembly during its next session.

42. Costa Rica was fully committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights and welcomed the emphasis placed on children with disabilities in the reports that had been presented, showing that the international community recognized the need to overcome their marginalization. Data collection on such children needed to be improved in order to formulate appropriate policies in keeping with the provisions of the Convention.

43. Concerns remained about the difficulties and discrimination suffered by children worldwide; for example, child marriage continued to be a challenge to human rights that States must address. Also, drug trafficking and organized crime, especially in Central America, had given rise to new forms of violence against children, and his delegation called on the United Nations system to pay greater attention to the problem.

44. Costa Rica urged Member States to enhance their cooperation with the human rights mechanisms, particularly when the well-being of children was at stake.

45. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique) said that his country's new Program of Action for Poverty Reduction was designed to provide children, especially the most vulnerable, with basic social services with regard to education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, and HIV/AIDS. It had also adopted specific national action plans to ensure a coordinated multisectoral planning approach to all their needs.

46. Mozambique was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had ratified the optional protocols, as well as the principal conventions of the International Labour Organization, and its legislation was being amended in consequence. The 2005 Constitution incorporated the Convention into the country's legislation and, among other measures, Parliament had enacted laws on human trafficking and a juvenile justice system to protect children's rights.

47. Mozambique joined the calls for a global political commitment to foster more equitable and balanced

economic and social progress. Only by ensuring minimum living standards for parents and society as a whole could the goal of making a world fit for children be attained.

48. **Mr. Phoon** (Singapore) said that, as a country whose only natural resource was its people, Singapore placed great importance on nurturing human talent. Children could best fulfil their potential in the presence of strong family relationships, a cohesive community and a nurturing environment.

49. Singapore had recently introduced a bill on international child abduction and amended its Child and Young Persons Act to enhance the welfare of children in residential care by ensuring that all children's homes were licensed. The country's infant and under-five mortality rates were among the lowest in the world and most children had been vaccinated against the principal diseases. More than one fifth of the annual national budget was allocated to schools and over 90 per cent of children completed primary education and continued on to secondary and post-secondary education.

50. In recent years, the country had accorded more attention and resources to children with special needs, and had enacted a master plan to ensure appropriate medical care, education and social support. Awareness-raising activities were conducted to educate the public about child abuse, neglect and sexual exploitation. Cases were dealt with based on the best interest of the child and victims were counselled and provided with support services.

51. Lastly, Singapore also believed in promoting diversity and encouraged cross-cultural exchanges in schools and in the community, through sports and cultural activities.

52. **Mr. Ababneh** (Jordan) said children accounted for 46.2 per cent of Jordan's population, and their best interests were a prominent feature of Jordanian law. Children born outside marriage were recognized as possessing legal personality, and provision was made for their care, education and other rights. The law also regulated the licensing and management of children's homes. Under recently enacted legislation, every person who used a data network for child prostitution purposes was liable to severe penalties. Trafficking in children and women was a serious offence, and the law provided for the protection of children from domestic violence. In addition, Jordan would shortly enact a Rights of the Child Act, implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The provisions of law governing child labour were in conformity with international instruments. It was unlawful to employ anyone under 16 years of age, or under 18 years of age for dangerous work.

53. In view of the importance of the early years of life, the Government provided services for children in that age group, and had executed projects designed to promote the care, development and preparation for learning of young children.

54. Jordan had ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had hosted a number of international and regional conferences on children, including a conference held in Amman in 2006 to launch the Global Women's Action Network for Children.

55. Lastly, in view of the admirable work that had been accomplished by Ms. Marta Santos Pais, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, it was to be hoped that her mandate would be renewed.

56. **Ms. Leskovar** (Slovenia) said that Slovenia supported projects to assist children, mainly in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. However, it had recently opened a school in Haiti, achieving one of its international development cooperation objectives, which was to assist children as the most vulnerable population group and to contribute to achieving the second Millennium Development Goal.

57. Slovenia welcomed the campaign for universal ratification of the optional protocols to the Convention. The new optional protocol to provide a communications procedure would be submitted to the General Assembly for adoption during the current session and it invited all countries to support the initiative.

58. Education was a fundamental aspect of every child's development; however, in conflict situations almost half the children were unable to attend school. The recent resolution of the Security Council on children and armed conflict (S/RES/1998 (2011)) addressed the issue of attacks on schools and hospitals, and called for accountability and an end to impunity.

59. Children affected by armed conflicts needed increased attention and Slovenia supported the extension of the mandate of the Special Representative

of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict. Children should be able to live in a world free from violence and abuse, and procedures and mechanisms for their protection should be developed at all levels.

60. Slovenia's Parliament had recently adopted a draft Family Code encompassing the core principles of the Convention, which should come into force shortly.

61. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia) said that there were still too many children left behind and it was appropriate that at the current session, the Committee had focused on children with disabilities, girl children, and children affected by poverty and armed conflicts. Such children were subject to multiple forms of discrimination, as were the children of migrant workers and child victims of transnational organized crime.

62. Indonesia believed that new approaches, such as the focus on equity adopted by UNICEF, would help Member States address the needs of the most vulnerable children and complement national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development. In addition, institutional and legal frameworks needed to be strengthened. Moreover, the well-being of children was closely tied to the efforts to promote women's rights.

63. Indonesian laws accorded children with disabilities equal treatment and attention. The introduction of a system of disaggregated statistics had brought visibility to such children and helped the Government formulate relevant policies and provide appropriate public services and infrastructure, including childcare facilities.

64. Learning from its past experience of conflict and social unrest, Indonesia had undertaken efforts to ensure the rights and the safety of child victims. It was developing a standard procedure for the reunification of children separated from their families and communities and would be allowing non-governmental organizations to assist in trauma healing and counselling in schools. It also planned to provide shelters or foster homes.

65. Cooperation and partnership were important factors in child protection efforts and Indonesia urged the relevant United Nations mechanisms to cooperate more closely with regional bodies and take advantage of their experience and institutionalized efforts.

66. **Ms. Prorok** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine firmly supported the campaign for universal ratification of the two optional protocols to the Convention and looked forward to the adoption of the third optional protocol on a communications procedure by the General Assembly. It underlined the importance of full implementation of the provisions of the universal and regional instruments relating to the rights of the child by all Member States.

67. Child welfare was a national priority and a national action plan was being implemented based on the Convention. In addition, under Ukraine's recent chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the rights of the child had been a priority, and a new strategy for the rights of the child had been elaborated, including the development of a child-friendly health-care system.

68. UNICEF was playing an important role in helping the Ukrainian authorities to create a favourable environment for children in need through programmes addressing their health, nutrition, education and protection. Nevertheless, challenges remained in combating HIV/AIDS, minimizing the impact of the Chernobyl disaster for children, developing services for children, and resolving the problem of violence and child trafficking. Broad international cooperation was required for further improvement in the existing mechanisms for protecting children's rights worldwide.

69. **Mr. Binkhothaila** (Saudi Arabia) said that Saudi Arabia attached great importance to the welfare of children and had acceded to the most important international conventions to protect children's rights. Since 1979, a National Committee on Childhood had existed, with a mandate to coordinate efforts in the areas of health, education, recreation and social development.

70. Because of the importance of early childhood education, a major plan had been implemented to expand kindergarten care by developing specialized curricula and to study all aspects of childhood in order to set up a statistical database available to researchers.

71. Efforts had also been made to reduce infant and child mortality and birth defects, ensure high levels of immunization and assist children with special needs. Child abuse was strictly prohibited and activities had been carried out to educate the community and also to raise awareness about the mental health of children.

72. **Ms. Bernadel** (Haiti) said that, in Haiti and especially in rural areas, problems in the area of education had always been related to the lack of infrastructure and a national school curriculum. Currently, most schools were operated by the private sector; however, shortly after taking office, the new President had set up an educational fund for the most marginalized children based on taxing remittances from abroad and international contributions, with the goal of providing free education for all. The new school year had been launched despite immense logistical challenges and represented a symbol of hope, paving the way to returning children to some semblance of normality.

73. It was necessary to reaffirm the political will to implement the commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and redouble efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals in order to guarantee respect for children's rights and safety.

74. **Ms. Ango Goze** (Niger) said that the recent reform of the national child protection system testified to the country's commitment to make it a national priority. A draft children's code had been drawn up, reflecting international law and Niger's traditions and customs, and a framework document had been elaborated with actions aimed at children in vulnerable situations.

75. The State had taken specific measures with regard to early childhood health care and HIV/AIDS, and, its social services provided medical care, equipment and rehabilitation to children with disabilities.

76. Reforms had been undertaken to ensure primary education for all children. Also, by increasing the education budget, the indicators had been improved and the disparities between girls and boys and between rural and urban areas reduced. The goal was to make education compulsory and free for children up to 16 years of age.

77. A youth parliament had been established in 2002 to promote the participation of young people in decision-making. Its mandate was to raise the awareness of young people and provide the authorities with information on the specific problems faced by youth.

78. As in other parts of the world, the children of Niger were exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation and ill-treatment. Mechanisms had been implemented to monitor the worst forms of child labour, in particular, a national action plan that included a list of hazardous work for children, and an ethics code to promote best practices in relation to child domestic workers.

79. Niger had ratified various international instruments concerning child trafficking and placed emphasis on the identification, withdrawal, social reinsertion and repatriation of victims, by strengthening administrative, social and legal mechanisms. The Criminal Code established harsh punishments for all crimes against children, including slavery and female genital mutilation.

80. The legal and institutional mechanisms put in place over the last 10 years had improved the situation of children in Niger; but, even though it devoted a substantial part of its resources to the welfare of its children, much remained to be done.

81. **Mr. Al-Saqer** (Kuwait) said that it was distressing that children with disabilities continued in many cases to be cared for in institutional settings. The ideal setting for such care was the child's family. The importance of the welfare of families and children in Kuwait was such that in the Constitution, the family was stated to be "the cornerstone of society". The efforts of institutions such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health had had striking results: 100 per cent of Kuwaiti children completed primary school, and the under-five mortality rate had been reduced to two deaths per 1,000.

82. Kuwait had acceded to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182, both prohibiting the employment of minors.

83. In the context of a discussion on children and their rights, it was appropriate to recall the suffering of Palestinian children in the occupied territories and the violations committed by the Israeli occupation forces. The international community and the United Nations should devote particular attention to the plight of those children.

84. **Mr. Ould Cheikh** (Mauritania) said that the United Nations system had made a crucial contribution to the health, well-being and safety of children worldwide. However, the efforts of the numerous

non-governmental organizations working to improve the situation of children should also be commended.

85. Over the past 20 years, Mauritania had adopted measures to enhance the rights of its children. The National Children's Council was mandated to implement the national child protection policy and a law had been adopted to protect children under the criminal code. Following ratification of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Mauritania had created a ministry responsible for child protection issues.

86. The budget allocated to education had been increased for several years and, by making primary education free and compulsory, the enrolment rate had been raised and illiteracy reduced. Mauritania was constantly striving to improve and protect the rights of its children.

87. **Mr. El Farouq** (Morocco) said Morocco welcomed the adoption by the Human Rights Council of an individual communication mechanism for children; it represented a decisive step towards embodying the commitment to protect the rights of the child in international law.

88. The promotion and protection of children's rights was a strategic objective of the efforts to implement the country's people-centred development model. By acceding to all the international instruments on the rights of the child, Morocco had undertaken to implement a series of initiatives in favour of those rights, which had led to real and sustainable change over the past 15 years.

89. The current national action plan for children focused on the promotion of health and education, and protection against abuse and exploitation. A midterm evaluation had been conducted recently and recommendations had been made to improve aspects relating to health care, education, and children with special needs, and to strengthen legislation to protect children, while finding effective solutions to problems such as early marriage and child sexual exploitation.

90. His delegation supported the principles listed by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography for setting up comprehensive national systems to protect children based on their rights, and especially the proposal for global mapping to provide a detailed overall view of the problem so as to restructure the corresponding national policies to ensure that they were in keeping with the relevant international instruments. In that regard, the national action plan for children had established two mechanisms: child protection units and the emergency medical assistance service.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.